

Michael F. Easley
Governor



State of North Carolina Office of the Governor

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GOV. EASLEY NAMED LEAD GOVERNOR ON NATIONAL GUARD ISSUES

RALEIGH – Gov. Mike Easley, along with Idaho Gov. Dirk Kempthorne, has been appointed leader of the National Governors Association's (NGA) efforts on issues related to the National Guard.

"Our brave men and women in the military are making sacrifices every day fulfilling their call to duty," Easley said. "Deployment puts a tremendous strain on our soldiers, their families and their communities. It is our responsibility here at home to do all we can to meet their needs and ease their burden."

In testimony today before the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions, NGA Executive Director Raymond Scheppach praised North Carolina, Idaho and Florida for their efforts to help military personnel and their families. His comments were made during a Congressional hearing that highlighted state military benefit programs.

According to a new survey from the NGA and the U.S. Department of Defense's Office of Military Community and Family Policy, more than 40 percent of the country's National Guard and Reserve are deployed overseas.

In North Carolina, nearly 7,400 soldiers and airmen in the National Guard have been called to active duty since Sept. 11, 2001, some more than once. The state's total force of guardsmen stands at about 11,700, and more than 4,200 men and women are currently serving full-time.

States have responded to widespread deployments by implementing a number of programs to help military personnel and their families. Programs focus on protecting families from foreclosure, offering childcare services, extending hiring preferences for state jobs to spouses of military personnel, and providing health and life insurance while activated.

The NGA cited several of North Carolina's initiatives including the shipment of safety supplies to the N.C. National Guard's 30th Heavy Separate Brigade. In April, Gov. Easley announced that the state would ship handheld radios, laptop computers, body armor and battery-operated flashing yellow lights to the unit's soldiers in Iraq. The brigade commander, Brig. Gen. Dan Hickman, had requested the supplies.

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